

Homily for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2022 Year C

“You have been trusted to look after something precious, so guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

What is St. Paul writing about in those words? What is this precious thing entrusted to us?

Are you aware that you possess something precious in your life? If it hadn't been entrusted to you would your life be any poorer?

Those are very important questions.

St. Paul seems to be referring to the sound teaching that he himself passed on to his converts. He was what you might call the first theologian in the Church. Unlike the other apostles, he was not around to hear the actual words and teachings of Christ.

St. Paul was a vicious persecutor of the early Christians before his conversion. He even held the clothes of the men who stoned St. Stephen to death.

So, St. Paul learned what Christ had said and thought second hand. He was an educated man and he meditated and prayed long and hard on what he had been told and tried to form in himself the mind of Christ.

Working on Christ words he stretched them and teased out of them implicit meanings and intentions and began to shape and form what is today called Theology. The precious thing that he himself had been given was not just the basis of Christ's own teachings, but the ability to expand it and build it into a rule of life.

That precious thing has been given to each and every one of us as well. Not just the words and teachings of Christ, but the ability to breathe life into them, to make them come alive and is so doing make them our own. We are all potential theologians. St. Paul writes that we should fan into a flame the gift that God has given us.

Have you done that lately? Have you ever done it?

Have you ever consciously, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, tried to make your faith come alive?

When did you last create any theology?

Perhaps never in the history of Christianity has our faith been so vulnerable.

What we believe is open to the sharpest attack and criticism from all sides. Is it nonsense? Is it outdated superstition? Is it all wishful thinking? Is it relevant to the world we live in? Does it hold anything important for the future of humanity?

How important is it for us?

All of that questioning is no bad thing, because if what we believe is true, it will survive any close or critical inspection.

Just as the passing centuries have chipped and chiselled away at the shape and form of what we believe, so too should the passing years of our own life.

The precious gift handed out to us when we were children should have grown more valuable as the years go by. We should know what stands the test of time. We should know by now what it is we believe in, and why we believe. All the crises, tests, troubles, losses, and dark moments should have refined our faith, like gold in a furnace.

Just as all the moments of happiness, joy and celebration should confirm what is useful and helpful and lasting in our faith.

The Pilgrim path of life is hard and hazardous for most of us, but as St. Paul says, "Ours is not a spirit of timidity." If we cling to the sound teaching he referred to, then through a little reflection we can shape and form it into our own. It will see us safely through to the end of our journey where an even more precious gift awaits us.